

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 DHA-02 TRSE-00 /060 W  
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R 250823Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1500  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
AMCONSUL ZAGREB  
CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENNA 3247

E.O. 11652: N/GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, YU, AU  
SUBJECT: SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY: CURRENT STATUS AND  
OUTLOOK

REF: VIENNA 1750

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE HAS DEVELOPED  
INTO ANOTHER CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE GOA AND THE SLOVENE  
MINORITY LEADERSHIP IN WAKE OF LATTER'S RECENT REJECTION  
OF A GOA ARRANGEMENT ON USE OF  
SLOVENE LANGUAGE AND BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN A SMALL NUMBER  
OF COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA. INDICATIONS ARE THAT  
GOA AUTHORITIES WILL MOVE AHEAD WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF  
ARRANGEMENT IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION FROM SLOVENE MINORITY  
ELEMENTS AND YUGOSLAVIA. SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP, NOW  
CAST PUBLICLY IN NEGATIVE, NON-COOPERATIVE ROLE, IS  
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SEEKING TO BRING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON GOA BY PROMOTING  
INTERNATIONAL LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN AND BY SUGGESTING  
ITS INABILITY TO CONTROL MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS AMONG  
SLOVENE MINORITY CONSIDERING THE USE OF VIOLENCE TO  
ADVANCE THEIR OBJECTIVES. OUTLOOK IS FOR AN INCREASE  
IN POLITICAL TENSIONS AND A STRONG PROSPECT OF ACTS OF  
VIOLENCE AGAINST PUBLIC PROPERTY IN CARINTHIA IN THE NEXT

MONTHS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP HAS REJECTED THE ARRANGEMENT WORKED OUT IN EARLY MARCH BETWEEN THE GOA AND THE THREE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN CARINTHIA REGARDING THE ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS IN NINE COMMUNITIES AND THE USE OF THE SLOVENE LANGUAGE IN ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEEDINGS AND BEFORE COURTS IN 14 COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA. THE REJECTION IS BASED ON THE SLOVENIAN MINORITY CONTENTION THAT AUSTRIAN LEGISLATION ON THE PROMOTION OF MINORITIES CONFLICTS WITH THE MEANING OF ARTICLE 7 OF THE 1955 STATE TREATY. THIS INTERPRETATION FLOWS FROM THE ABSENCE OF A NUMERICAL QUALIFICATION IN THE ARTICLE CONCERNING THE REQUIRED SIZE OR PERCENTAGE OF THE MINORITY WHICH MUST BE PRESENT IN ANY COMMUNITY BEFORE MINORITY RIGHTS CAN BE ENJOYED. THE SLOVENIAN VIEW-POINT IS THAT BASING THE ARRANGEMENT ON THE 1976 LANGUAGE CENSUS HAS THE EFFECT OF SHARPLY REDUCING THE AREA OF APPLICATION OF THE TREATY.

3. IN CONTRAST, THE MAXIMUM POSITION OF THE SLOVENIAN MINORITY IS THAT ROAD SIGNS AND THE USE OF SLOVENE AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE SHOULD BE POSSIBLE IN THE SAME NUMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AS HAD BEEN DECREED BY UK OFFICIALS IN THE EARLY POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD IN CARINTHIA, WHICH WAS PART OF UK ZONE OF OCCUPATION. THIS LINE OF ARGUMENTATION CONTENTS THAT THE UK DECISION WAS BASED ON THE CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SLOVENE MINORITY IN SOUTHERN CARINTHIA AT THAT TIME. ACCEPTANCE OF THIS POSITION BY THE GOA WOULD INVOLVE THE ERECTION OF ROAD SIGNS AND THE USE OF SLOVENE AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN 5 TO 6 TIMES AS MANY COMMUNITIES AS FORESEEN UNDER THE MARCH 1977 ARRANGEMENT. THE SLOVENE MINORITY CASE RESTS HEAVILY ON HISTORICAL AND LEGAL ARGUMENTS WHILE THAT OF THE GOA AND CARINTHIAN POLITICAL PARTIES, AWARE OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS AS IMPORTANT FACTOR PROMOTING ETHNIC ASSIMILATION, CALLS FOR "THE RECOGNITION OF CURRENT REALITIES."

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4. THE REAFFIRMATION BY THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP OF ITS CONFRONTATIONAL STANCE PUTS IT IN THE POSITION OF BEING CAST PUBLICLY IN A NEGATIVE, NON-COOPERATIVE ROLE. TO COUNTER THIS ADVERSE IMAGE

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AND TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF ITS OPPOSITION, THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP HAS MOUNTED A CAMPAIGN TO GAIN SUPPORTERS FOR ITS CAUSE AND TO BRING WORLD PUBLIC OPINION TO BEAR ON THE GOA OVER THE ISSUE. DELEGATIONS OF SLOVENE-SPEAKING AUSTRIANS HELD A PROTEST RALLY IN VIENNA DURING UN SECGEN WALDHEIM'S LAST VISIT TO THE AUSTRIAN CAPITAL, PROTEST TELEGRAMS HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED TO VARIOUS INTERNATIONAL BODIES, AND AN INTERNATIONAL LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING ACTIVITY IN THE U.S., HAS BEEN STARTED TO BELABOR THE GOA ON ITS TREATMENT OF THE SLOVENIAN MINORITY. THE CAMPAIGN APPEARS TO HAVE BECOME IRRITANT TO CHANCELLOR KREISKY SINCE HE STATED RECENTLY THAT AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION SHOULD VISIT CARINTHIA AND ALSO SLOVENIA TO COMPARE THE TREATMENT OF THE SLOVENIAN-SPEAKING POPULATION IN BOTH COUNTRIES REGARDING THEIR EXERCISE OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. THE GOA, FOR ITS PART, HAS RECONCILED ITSELF TO THE

CONTINUING OPPOSITION OF THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP TO THE PROJECTED LANGUAGE-ROAD SIGNS ARRANGEMENT. IT HAS EVALUATED THE DEGREE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS OPPOSITION AND THE LIKELY FUTURE REACTION OF YUGOSLAVIA ON THE ISSUE AND HAS CONCLUDED THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS OUTWEIGH POSSIBLE NEGATIVE ONES CONCERNING FOREIGN POLICY AND THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARRANGEMENT SHOULD THEREFORE GO FORWARD. THE EXPECTATION NOW IS THAT APPROPRIATE ORDINANCES AND THE ERECTION OF BILINGUAL ROAD SIGNS WILL BE COMPLETED BEFORE SUMMER. THE EARLY SUMMER TIMETABLE FOR COMPLETION OF THE WORK IS PROBABLY BASED ON A GOA DESIRE TO HAVE A DEFENSIBLE RECORD OF ACTION TAKEN ON THE ISSUE, SHOULD THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT RAISE THE MATTER AT THE BELGRADE CSCE FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE. THE AUSTRIAN MFA ALSO CONSIDERS AS DISTINCT POSSIBILITIES DEMONSTRATIONS OR PROTEST RALLIES AGAINST THE GOA IN AUSTRIA AND YUGOSLAVIA DURING THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE.

6. FROM THE VIENNA VANTAGE POINT, THE GOY REMAINS ADAMANT IN ITS STANCE THAT AUSTRIAN LEGISLATION ON THE PROMOTION OF MINORITIES DOES NOT SATISFY THE COMMITMENTS ENTERED INTO BY AUSTRIA IN ARTICLE 7 OF THE 1955 STATE TREATY. AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, YUGOSLAVIA ALSO SEEMS INTERESTED IN NOT HAVING THE CONTROVERSY GET OUT OF HAND AND DAMAGE BILATERAL RELATIONS IN OTHER AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. THE NEW YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR TO VIENNA, WHO ARRIVED THIS WEEK, IS EXPECTED BY THE MFA TO REITERATE WELL-KNOWN YUGOSLAV POSITIONS ON THE CONTROVERSY BUT NOT TO BE THE BEARER OF A TOUGHER GOY LINE AT THIS JUNCTURE. THE GOA HAS CONCLUDED THAT YUGOSLAVIA HAS ONLY LIMITED LEVERAGE IN THE CONTROVERSY AND THAT ANY ACTION YUGOSLAVIA MIGHT TAKE BEYOND ROUTINE ORAL AND WRITTEN PROTESTS WOULD

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ALSO HAVE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR YUGOSLAVIA. THE YUGOSLAV EMBASSY IN VIENNA, WHEN QUERIED MOST RECENTLY ON SUBJECT, REPEATED THE FULL PANOPLY OF ARGUMENTS WHY AUSTRIA SHOULD MEET ITS ARTICLE 7 COMMITMENTS BUT OFFERED NO INDICATION WHETHER THE GOY MIGHT RAISE THE ISSUE AT THE UPCOMING BELGRADE CSCE CONFERENCE. THE ONLY SHIFT NOTED IN THE YUGOSLAV PRESENTATION WAS THE OBSERVATION THAT IN THE GOY VIEW THE ISSUE HAS ALREADY BEEN INTERNATIONALIZED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT BY THE EFFORTS OF THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP TO BRING THE MATTER TO THE ATTENTION OF WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES.

7. THE OUTLOOK FOR COMPROMISE AND RESOLUTION OF THE

MINORITY CONTROVERSY IN THE NEAR TERM IS VERY UNFAVORABLE. ALL PARTIES TO THE ISSUE HAVE ADOPTED TOUGH, IRRECONCILABLE PUBLIC STANCES ALLOWING LITTLE FLEXIBILITY. THE SLOVENE MINORITY LEADERSHIP AND THEIR YUGOSLAV SUPPORTERS FEEL THAT IF ANY ACCOMMODATIONS ARE TO BE MADE, THEY MUST COME FROM THE GOA SIDE. THE KEY ELEMENT IN THE EQUATION IS CHANCELLOR KREISKY WHO APPEARS TO HAVE OPTED FOR A CONTINUATION OF THE GOA POLICY OF TRYING TO MANAGE THE ISSUE WITHOUT RESOLVING IT. THIS APPROACH SUGGESTS THAT CARINTHIA IS LIKELY TO BE PLAGUED BY INCREASED TENSIONS AND POSSIBLY VIOLENCE THIS SUMMER.MEEHAN

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